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ABSTRACT

Drawing from the experiences of 30 students and their mentors in 15 programs, this pamphlet offers descriptions of mentorships, or experience-based workplace learning to help high school students make the transition from school to work. Workplace mentorship is defined. Examples are then offered of the various types of activities at work sites that correspond to possible learning experiences. For students, these include learning about the world of work, gaining in knowledge about themselves, demonstrating gains in work maturity, improving communications skills, and having an opportunity to apply basic skills in real situations. Next, the type of persons interested in mentorship and desirable qualities of mentors are considered. The pamphlet concludes with a summary of suggestions from mentors and program staff for encouraging mentorship. (YLB)

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WHY MENTORSHIP?

Now more than ever, young people need a helping hand to get started in the world of work. At Far West Laboratory we have, for several years, been investigating the value of experience-based workplace learning as a way to help high-school students make the transition from school to work.

Our most recent studies have looked at the workplace mentor--one adult serving as advisor, role-model, and teacher to one young person. The concept is a familiar one. Many persons can remember an adult who helped them--was influential at some particular period in their lives. Many of us also can remember times when we offered special counsel and assistance to some young person.

Our work at the Laboratory has sought to bring together what is known about mentorship in the workplace and to record what is really happening in some ongoing mentorships. In the following pages you will see descriptions of students and their workplace activities obtained through through interviews with young people and mentors.

We feel that workplace mentorship can be exciting and rewarding for both the mentor and the young person. It is a way an adult can, on a personal, one-to-one basis, help a youth on the threshold of adulthood. We hope that the personal and perceptive contributions of our group of interviewees will excourage others to seek out opportunities for mentorship.*

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* For a technical report on this study see Evenson, J.S. Interviews on Workplace Mentorship: Background, Methodology and Data Analysis. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1982.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE MENTORSHIP?

A high-school student planning a career in special education works with a skilled teacher at a center for handicapped children and not only learns about the job but also gains a friend and an advisor. An experienced public-relations executive takes on a young volunteer who earns school credit for his exploration of how to run a publicity campaign. A skilled mechanic introduces a young man to the real workings of an automotive shop. The owner of a boutique works closely with a teen-age girl on her first job. A veterinarian lets a young student follow him on rounds in order to grasp the full range of his tasks--from routine examinations to major surgery. A young manager at a fast-foods outlet helps a younger worker and provides valuable advice from her own experience on how to behave on the job.

In each of these instances a young person is paired with an adult in the workplace. The purpose of the relationship for young persons will vary: to obtain job experience; to explore a particular career; to learn more about the range of their own interests and abilities; or to gain exposure to workers and the world of work. The intensity of the relationship will also vary. When the adult serves as a role model and shows a concern with guiding the young person in the development of ideas, values, and morals, then the adult begins to assume the role of mentor. Although mentors are found in many situations, the particular type we are describing, a workplace mentor, takes responsibility for helping the young person make the transition from youth to the working adult world.

Workplace mentorships can and do florish on their own, but they can also be encouraged through planned programs in high school and in the community. We looked at a variety of workplace-mentorship programs ranging

from those that focused on providing paid work experience to those incorporating non-paid workplace exploration as a way of enriching school subjects. This pamphlet draws from the experiences of 30 students and their mentors in 15 programs. All students had spent time on a one-to-one basis with their mentors over a period ranging from several weeks to several months. One of the students was Don, who experienced a workplace mentorship through his enrollment in an alternative high-school program.

> Before this year, Don's schooling in Marin County, California, had been uniformly unsuccessful. Although he scored high on aptitude tests, Don never applied himself at any subject. In fact, he cut classes frequently and didn't show any interest in those he did attend. Don enjoys working outdoors and had vaguely intended to enter maintenance work. He simply hadn't seen the need for academic learning--until now. Although he still wants to work outdoors, his association with Alex over the past few months has given him new insights into what career he might enter in the future.
>
> Alex is a state park ranger, a young man who has worked his way up from a park aide to his present position in charge of restoring and preparing a state property for public use as a state park. As part of his new school program, Don agreed on a placement with Alex to serve as a real-world experience around which to organize his school learning. Don assists Alex as a volunteer in the park restoration project.
>
> Through his work activities and personal association with Alex, Don has learned about indigenous native plants and animals and, perhaps more importantly, about the rich history of the area near his home: from Indian life, Spanish land grants, settlers from the East Coast, the Bear Flag Rebellion, Civil War activity, 19th century vineyard and farm life, the 1906 earthquake, to the present.
>
> All these things have been of strong interest to Don. And now his interest in working outdoors has been augmented by a constructive reason for doing so: to protect the natural plant and animal life there, and to maintain those buildings and artifacts at the site that are evidence of the history that has preceded him. Don strongly feels that he will follow a career path similar to that of Alex's. Alex has become a very important person in Don's life as a wise and trusted friend--a workplace mentor.

LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

We asked both the young people and their mentors for descriptions of activities at work-sites. We also gave them lists of possible learning experiences and asked for examples of activities that matched items on the list. Here is what we found out.

Young people learned about the world of work. Because all of the mentorships were designed for the workplace, it is not surprising that students and mentors did report that students learned about a job (although not necessarily how to do it). The list of activities is extensive. For example, they reported that students:

- Learned how a small business is run.
- Observed how intricate law is and difficult the job of a lawyer is.
- Were able to watch a full surgery (animal hospital).
- Learned operations and procedures of park unit.
- Learned about the real estate business.

Students and mentors often felt that skills had been learned for an entry level and sometimes for a career job. Some students gained in skills that might apply to jobs such as cashier, typist, sales clerk, maintenance worker, apprentice mechanic, secretary, paralegal aide, computer operator, record clerk, bagger, news assistant, and physical science aide. Other students gained some insight into the nature of career jobs, such as creative writing, interior design, business administration, public relations, advertising, marine biology, merchandising, publishing, jurisprudence, special education and fashion merchandising.

Both mentors and students, but especially mentors, saw the importance of learning about workplace behavior. Students were able to observe:

- the organization, interplay, activities, etc., of an office
- how to work with people in a business environment
- Etiquette in the office, dress, decorum etc.
- Rules for dealing with people in the office

They learned specifics of the work environment, such as: "You can't bring your problems to work--leave them at home." And one student was surprised to find that "everybody gets along like friends."

Young people gained in knowledge about themselves. They learned more about their likes and strengths, about different jobs they might have and about how to qualify for jobs. Students' comments included:

- Learned about the career ladder within the store.
- Saw all the different jobs on the newspaper.
- Learned that I hate filing.
- Realize that this is a good career, like it and am good at it.
- Learned that I don't want journalism, but liked working constructively.
- Found out what I didn't care to do.
- Learned that I hate being tied behind desk, and like physical activity.

Interestingly, when we asked about "learning how to find a job," only three students (and no mentors) mentioned that job-search skills were included in the workplace-mentorship activity. Considering, however, that their other comments stressed the importance of knowledge about a job and increased awareness of interests and abilities, one could speculate that they had, indeed, acquired job-search skills.

Young people demonstrated gains in work-maturity through their behavior in the workplace. Mentors talked in particular about gains by students in behavior that involved following rules, doing what the boss or supervisor wanted, and getting along with people, while students were more likely to mention trying to learn new things and acting on their own (taking initiative). Mary and Jane are two students who gained in work-maturity skills through their mentorships.

Mary worked with a mentor who was the news director of a radio station. She learned about the jobs of a newswriter, broadcaster and station manager. This fitted well with her interests--she mentioned Walter Cronkite as someone whom she admired: "He knows what he's doing in journalism--my chosen field." Among persons whom she personally knew, she greatly admired her mentor who "never went to college, but has done what she wanted to do and is successful."

With the help of her mentor, she learned how to run machinery, such as tape editors, at the radio station. She really concentrated on learning how to discern what is important in a story and how to write stories. She needed to adapt and to work independently, especially in responding to telephone calls from listeners and in preparing material (such as traffic and weather) for disc jockeys by listening to other stations. She also conducted telephone interviews to collect news items.

Her mentor reported that her writing was excellent--that she had learned to write in radio style. When asked how well the mentorship experience worked, Mary said, "I've gotten more independent." She felt that she had "proved that I can do things really associated with work" and that she had learned to work with professionals.

Mary's experience provided her with a chance to learn about many aspects of one professional area. Jane is a student whose relationship with her mentor enabled her to mature in practical ways that will help her to succeed in the working world.

Jane was placed for work experience at a fast-foods outlet that sold ice cream. This was her first paid job, and much of what she gained was in the work-maturity area. When asked what she had learned or done that was important, her intial observation was "learned to be patient with customers--I wasn't patient at first." She also mentioned that "customers have to be treated well. They are important."

Her mentor was the young woman manager of the store who taught Jane the skills needed for an assistant manager such as supervising employees, ordering from wholesalers, and taking inventory. She felt that Jane had "learned responsibility--she had learned to run the place while I'm not here."

Jane learned to do things the way the supervisor wanted, "even if you don't want to," to wear appropriate clothing and call in when sick. She acted on her own by finding things to do, "If not busy--clean things. You don't get paid for standing around." She learned to follow lists the supervisor left for

her. She also demonstrated reacting to an emergency situation by removing ice-cream from a broken freezer and placing it in the walk-in.

The mentor felt that the most important thing she had been able to give Jane was "how to work with other people and how to treat them...she was quiet at the start and does well now with people." Jane says, "I didn't talk much--was shy. People didn't especially like me--but when I get to know people, I talk more.

This first job would have been valuable, in any case, for Jane, but her close relationship with her supervisor gave an added dimension to the experience. She says, "We got along well--you learn more from someone you like." Jane's future plans have been affected by her mentorship. "The experience in the store tells me I don't want to stay in fast-foods... she doesn't either, and we sometimes talk about it." Jane and her mentor have become friends. As the mentor says, "Not just manager and employee...she comes with problems--I tell her what I'd do, not what she should do."

Young people improved in communication skills. Communication skills came in many different forms. Young people often found themselves for the first time in a working situation with adults. Some were in sales or other positions where they had to interact with the public. Being present in meetings and accompaning the mentor to community events were part of some experiences. "Listening to people" was a frequent activity.

Barbara had an opportunity to put on fashion shows with the help of her mentor, the manager of a department store. Her activities earned her career-exploration credit through a high-school program. The task required her to work with volunteer models who were attached to various fund-raising organizations in the community.

Barbara's mentor felt she had "improved her ability to communicate with the models, she was able to accomplish more in meetings in briefer time, she was able to listen and ask what they wanted." Barbara herself mentioned that she was able to listen to the models, and then was able to tell them, if necessary, that they could not wear what they wanted.

Young people had an opportunity to apply basic skills in real situations. Young people and mentors seldom volunteered examples of gains through mentorship activities in basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics).

However, when they were prompted by a list that contained an item on "improvement in basic skills" the results were quite different. Examples of use of basic skills in real life work situation were given by one or both members in 22 mentorships out of the 30. They did cashiering, wrote up orders, counted receipts, wrote deposit slips, conducted an inventory, figured the square footage of roofs and buildings, and improved spelling by writing notes. Their math was utilized in working chemistry equations, adding receipts and geometry. They read books, did research on animals, kept a journal of activities, wrote business letters, as well as fund-raising letters and speeches, all of this in addition to school-related work. It is apparent that many of the young people had a meaningful and unique opportunity to improve in basic skills through their worksite activities.

ARE WORKPLACE MENTORSHIPS VALUABLE?

> "He gave me a chance that not many people would give a sixteen year old girl."
>
> "Most of what I've learned is because of Bill. We've talked a lot about life - I really respect his opinion on things."

During the interviews we asked students, mentors and program staff to consider the value of the mentorship to the student. Even though it was apparent that the student had engaged in a variety of work-related experiences, were these important to the student in preparation for work and in planning for future?

Young people who had had paid jobs felt that the mentorship had been more helpful. About half of the students who had previously worked on a paid job felt that the job had been less helpful then the mentorship experience. Only six of 23 thought the job had been more important.

Next to family, mentors were seen as most helpful by this group of young people. For about half of the students, parents and other family were the most important source of information, help and encouragement. However six persons said that the mentor had been the most helpful person and 14 of the 30 specifically named the mentor as someone whom they "admired and respected because of their work" or who "has helped me get ready to go to work." Some young persons did not mention family at all; especially for this group it appears that the mentor can be an important influence. Among the students comments were:

> ..."she puts me into situations that let me advance."
>
> "She understands and knows what I want to do. She also was a secretary--she tells me and helps me with new things."

"He's really accomplished in his field and he really enjoys his field. Does a lot to help young people learn and experience biology."

"...super helpful...she spends a lot of one-to-one time. She's a friend, I talk to her a lot."

Students felt that Mentorship experience would affect their future plans. We questioned students about their plans for the future and then asked, "What does your experience with your mentor have to do with these plans?" Twenty-two of the 30 students either were sure the experience would have a considerable effect or felt it could be very important. Only two students felt the experience was unrelated to their future plans. Some young people felt more prepared for the working world: they learned "what an office is really like". "I'll have the know-how to get a job there or somewhere else. My experiences give me a professional background." Others were helped in decisions about the next step in preparing for work:

"...she's told me about her jobs. Its helped me decide to do this kind of work and the two choices of kinds of colleges to enter."

"He's influenced my choice; narrowed my choices--made law a more attractive choice--made it a strong second choice."

"From her I've learned what journalism is--and that I don't want that so much--that the pressure part of her job isn't for me--I would still like to write for magazines, etc.."

Mentors and program staff felt that the mentorships had helped students prepare for the future. We asked each mentor how helpful the workplace mentorship had been for the student. When we asked each staff person the same question we found that they tended to agree with the student's mentor. Only one mentorship was described by staff and mentor as not important in the student's future plans. All other mentorships were

considered helpful by both parties and most were seen as having a very positive or highly significant effect on the young persons plans.

One significant relationship was that between Robert and Lillian, who was approaching retirement age and a career employee of the telephone company. Robert had just graduated from high school when he entered an employability-development program for inner-city youths. In the program he attended workshops and classes to learn skills and behavior necessary on a job, and he was placed in an entry-level job as an information operator with Pacific Telephone Company. The program staff continued to support Robert through both individual counseling and group workshops. But most important was the encouragement and support provided him by Lillian, his job supervisor. When Robert started his job, her special role as his "workplace mentor" was explained to him; she was to be at once his supervisor and his friend.

According to program staff, the crucial element in this relationship was "Lillian's unconditional acceptance of Robert as an intelligent, sensible person needing guidance...she gave latitude toward making mistakes." Robert was very naive about the business world at first; he had trouble using the telephone to talk with customers. The staff person feels that the experience with Lillian is "paramount in Robert's life."

Lillian says that she likes the change in Robert and the mentorship has enabled her to know him: "a worthwhile young citizen." When asked what was the most important thing she was able to give Robert that might help him in the future she replied "my ears," really listening to him, hearing what he was saying and understanding him.

Robert describes Lillian as a "wonderful person who wants young people with determination to make it." He hopes to continue seeing her after she retires. He felt that he had learned through his experiences about good employer--employee relationships. How did Lillian help him plan for the future? "She told me, 'set yourself a long-range goal and work for it. Don't take second best'."

QUALITY MENTORSHIP

Although as a whole the mentors and mentorships were valued by participants it was apparent that some mentorships had given more to the student than had others. Successful mentorships could have many different characteristics but some consistent themes appeared. New ways of learning and new kinds of relationships with adults were considered important factors by participants.

We found sixteen "broad-base" mentorships, considered of higher quality, and fourteen "limited-base" mentorships that seemed to have less of the desired quality. Mentorships in the limited-base group were focused more on job skills and on work-orientation. Especially the five considered the most limited offered little besides work experience or a superficial level of career exploration. For example, one young man said that his "mentor" was a helpful manager who was easy to work with but with whom he did not have much contact. His job consisted mainly of bagging groceries and related to his future plans only in that it might lead to a job at the store (an alternate, not his primary plan).

The sixteen mentorships in the broad-base group showed a higher involvement of both student and mentor. Some emphasized a close relationship between mentor and student to promote personal maturity, input details of appropriate behavior and encourage, and teach job and career skills.

In this type, the young people usually showed a need for general direction. The description of these mentorships are among the most rewarding to read, close ties, supportive behavior, role-modeling, and concrete encouragement. The description of Robert and his mentor Lillian, presented previously, is an example of this type of mentorship.

Another kind of broad-base mentorship emphasized in-depth career exploration or job experience, imparting of substantial information about a career or various careers and involvement of the mentor in student planning for the future. The young people in these mentorships were competent and often able partners. Behavioral growth--appropriate work behavior or personal maturation--was not as important as career-oriented growth.

> Sally is a young woman who gained career skills and was aided in making career plans through her mentorship. She says of her mentor "He's convinced me about the necessity to have broad areas of knowledge--he can do numerous things, and stresses breath of skills--including writing. He advised me on how to prepare for college and where to go to best learn journalism and creative writing. Also he's teaching me numerous skills--photography and layout. He's given me confidence. I was interested in journalism but didn't know where I fit, and how bad the competition would be. His concern, letters of recommendation, and guidance gave me courage."
>
> How did the experience fit in with her future plans? "It solidified my plans; explained things necessary for preparation; helped me get skills for entry; showed me about kinds of jobs and where they exist. It has given me the confidence necessary to compete for a job and know I'm competent."

The kind of learning provided through mentorships can be stimulating and rewarding to many students. Some students learn best in an active mode. The mentorship may provide a real change from past history by providing a motivation to learn in a real situation. The positive relationship with an adult can change a negative attitude toward school and learning.

As one student described it: "He explains things in a way that is easy to understand--layman's terms. It's been good for me. He cares about what I'm doing and helps me see easier ways to do things if they're there."

> One mentor opened the eyes of a young woman about the world of science. The mentor says that Marcia "likely has a stereotype as a flighty blonde but she recognized that she has a brain, and can use it. She is extremely competent but not aware of it." The program staff concurred that this experience had been most helpful because it "opened up new areas of interest and competence that she wasn't aware of...this mentor likes young people; works with them as young adults; is flexible."
>
> How did Marcia feel? "He made my outlook wider; showed me I could do things in science; I can do many more things than I thought. I consider him one of my very best friends. If people are neat, then I want to do well also."

Young people enjoyed the relationship with an experienced and suportive adult. Marcia, described above, place much credit for her successful mentorship on her "neat" mentor. Many of the young people were just as positive about their mentors. In fact when they were asked what they had like about the mentorship (what worked well) the most frequent response had to do with new and better interpersonal relationships. Career development and acquisition of career knowledged were less frequently mentioned than interpersonal and personal benefits.

Young persons in Career Exploration programs were more likely to have a complex and varied experience. Mentorships in the limited-base group tended to be those from work-experience programs (nine of fourteen) while eleven of the sixteen mentorships in the broad-base group were from career-exploration programs. However, it should be noted that the potential is there for excellent mentorships in work-experience programs, as is demonstrated by some in our set of interviews. It does appear however, that adults involved in work-experience programs are less likely to see the

advantage of, or to have the opportunity to provide in-depth one-to-one experiences for their students.

Young persons who are effective learners and good workers are more likely to succeed in mentorship situations. Students and mentors were asked about qualities in young persons that might help them succeed in a mentorship. Most of the answers could be grouped into two important areas; students should be good learners and good workers. A young person should be eager to learn, curious, able to listen and ask questions, be open and receptive to new ideas, enthusiastic and committed. In the area of good work the student should be willing to work and a hard worker, follow rules and take direction, have good manners, and appearance, and be cooperative.

Of course, not all young people had all these worthy characteristics. Different persons emphasized different qualities as is shown in the following sets of desirable charcteristics mentioned by individual students.

- Learn to ask questions when something is not clear. Polite. Understanding of adult's position in the mentorship. Tolerant of proper authority.
- Work hard. Try to do your best. Act as an adult. Willing to ask questions. Assertive.
- Responsible, willing to work a lot. Ready to work. Eager to learn. Do on own instead of depending on book. Independent.
- Willing to learn and listen. Willing to follow rules and orders. Not afraid to ask questions when have problems or don't understand.
- Initiative. Strong desire to learn as much as you can. Do what you want to do within the rules, think for yourself.

MENTORS AND MENTORING

"It excited me that she, with no previous interest, could show a strong interest and aptitude for science."

"I enjoy teaching people what I know -- it causes me to think more about things myself and learn myself."

Through previous evaluations of experience-based career education we had learned that recruitment of "resource persons" in the community was not a problem--there was always a pool of persons who wanted to help young persons. For these interviews, we were able to locate fifteen programs that were successful in finding and using mentors; it certainly appears that persons with an interest in mentorship are available to those who will seek them out.

We talked to mentors who were self employed, supervisors in large and small businesses, professionals (such as lawyers) and foremen in skilled trades (such as mechanics). Mentorships can be found in many settings; the main requirement is interest and enthusiasm on the part of the working adult and the young learner.

Working adults want to serve as mentors and felt that they themselves gained something of value. In these interviews it was found that mentors did not feel that the activities with young persons cost them anything in time--they could still do their job and were not making a personal sacrifice. In fact, many were seeking the enrichment that can be brought to a job through helping a young person.

This was not the first such relationship for many in the group; fourteen mentors reported at least some similar experience while ten reported extensive work with young persons on a one-to-one basis. Almost all plan to continue to serve as mentors to young people. Fifteen of the mentors were sure that they would remain in touch with the student after the

mentorship had formally terminated. It is obvious that these activities were a continuing source of satisfaction for our 30 mentors.

Mentors were well aware of what students had gained through the mentorship. We were interested to note, however, that many mentors volunteered information about what the mentorship had meant to them. For example:

> "I've gained a lot of information. He's provided me with a different perspective about work, asked questions that made me research the answers."
>
> "I like the youthful energy. It is nice to have someone around with this "naive" perspective."
>
> "His work is excellent. He is a resource. I have no operating funds and good volunteers are lifesavers."
>
> "It's rewarding to work with talented 'raw material'. Makes one rethink aspects of one's life and profession."

Working adults and students feel that a successful mentor should: interact effectively with young people; provide a good environment for learning; and be personally and professionally a good model. We asked mentors and students to describe what they thought were desirable qualities in mentors. There is obviously no one set of characteristics that all mentors have in common. However, we did find three general areas that seemed to be most important in the eyes of the participants.

Mentors need to interact effectively with young people. Patience was the quality mentioned most frequently. Accompanying this is a concern with understanding about young people and caring about them. Mentors should enjoy young people, work well and communicate well with them. Statements by mentors include:

- Really care about students' careers and needs.
- Be willing to feel out and understand their problems.
- Accept youth as the near-adults that they are.
- Use effective listening--not hearing just what you want to hear.

Mentors need to provide a good environment for learning. For some this means consistency in rules and behavior. "Keeping the relationship straight" --the mentor is the leader, more than just a friend. Skills in teaching in a one-to-one relationship include listening, answering questions honestly, allowing students to make mistakes and "being willing to pick them up when they fall." Among other comments by mentors:

- Realize that they are here to learn.
- Create success.

Mentors often serve as role models for their young students. Personal qualities that are frequently mentioned as desirable are flexibility, adaptability, responsibility, maturity and being outgoing. Mentors should also feel good about themselves and their work. For example:

- Keep up with things in your field and seek to learn yourself.
- Be satisfied with your own life.
- Be reasonably learned in one's craft.

<u>The young people we talked with agreed with mentors on desirable qualities for the mentor role.</u> Young persons provided some thought-provoking lists of what they see as desirable qualities for mentors. Some sets of responses by students follow. Mentors should be:

- Open to conversation and suggestions. Patient, informative. Confident with their own career.

- Understanding of the youth that they are working with--things that affect their life and opinions. Don't beat around the bush--say what you mean. A caring person--not just doing it as a job.

- Patient--take time to work with teenagers. Not too uptight--fun to be around. Experienced themselves--should like their job.

- Treat you as a regular worker but realize that you are still learning. Give you real work with somewhat lower expectancies. Open to questions. Friendly, accessable.

And one student summed it up in three words: patience, confidence, experience.

POSTSCRIPT – OPPORTUNITIES FOR MENTORSHIP

Mentors and program staff provided a number of suggestions for encouraging mentorship. The following paragraphs summarize their ideas.

<u>You too can be a workplace mentor.</u> You may already be a workplace mentor or you may be in a position to enrich an on-going workplace experience for a young employee, volunteer or student--to move it toward a broad-based learning experience. You don't need a program to do this--mentorship is basically a one-to-one relationship and, while an organized program can be very helpful, in the end <u>you</u> are the one who makes it all come together for the young person.

Mentors, and persons who work with them, feel that it is especially important to get some information in two areas--how to create a rich learning situation for young people and how to work with them in a positive, understanding way. Students and mentors need to agree on student and employee goals and student objectives and to negotiate a learning plan that stresses meaningful work, not busy work. If possible, tasks should be arranged to build creatively so that the student can grow on the job.

One strength of mentorship is the availability of active, involved ways of learning through experiencing, participating, hearing, observing, and discussing. Because of the close mentor/student relationship it is possible for the participants to work out the most advantageous way for that student to learn in each specific situation.

It is important to be able to communicate effectively and to understand what young people are thinking and doing. For example:

"don't treat them with kid gloves, but their confidence level is more fragile than adults; communication is vital".

"Teenagers will ask a lot of questions--remember that they are not adults yet."

One helpful skill is "constructive criticism"--tact, diplomacy, timing, knowing when to offer help. Also, it's useful to know something about the specific kinds of young people whom you see.

You too can help start a workplace mentorship program. Such programs are sponsored by schools, businesses and community organizations. They do not need a complicated structure--the essential function is to bring together working adults and students. An advantage for mentors in being associated with a program is that it provides a way to get information that they need about working with young people and planning learning experiences. Another advantage of a formal program is that someone is available to assist the mentor with any problems and to monitor student progress in the work setting.

This pamphlet cannot cover all the specifics of program development, but we hope you have "become aware that there are lots of people who like to do this. They just have to be shown how to do it." As one program staff person suggested: "Mentors enjoy it. The community supports it. Get on the phone and start!"